

kid — look where it has come. We have to do the same thing with elder abuse. And, it is not there. The more attention it receives, it continues to go forward. We might step back a couple times, but we are going forward. Every time we get a prosecution, every time the media makes a case and says this is what we're seeing in this county, to me, that's pivotal — knowing that it is going forward and is getting attention that it did not get before.

You lose some cases, but I will give you an instance on what has happened. I had a case in a local facility. We prosecuted a behavioral analyst for allowing the subject to bang her head on the floor more than a hundred times. It was horrible. Can you imagine letting someone bang her head on a concrete floor, not a carpeted floor? Well, he considered it therapy. We lost that case, and I really got upset and disheartened because of it. The perpetrator was a very well-respected, educated behavioral

analyst. The jury liked him. I liked him. Our victim was a ward of the state. I could not prosecute this guy. However, they changed the policy in the facility from then on. They can no longer do negative behavioral analysis. That was a negative behavior instead of a positive one, so they changed it. We didn't win, and that's OK, because they changed the policy, so no one else is going to have to go through that.

I might not have won the court case, but seeing policy change for the good, I was OK after that. If you effect change, that is what we are all about, just make it better. That's my pivotal moment — along with getting public attention.

#### What do you love most about what you do?

I like being involved in this issue, because I see where it is going and I want to stay current and, hopefully, make a difference with it. If I'm not in it, I can't do anything about it. But, I have an opportunity

to make a difference. I know that's probably a cliché, but I have a chance to do something to make it better. I have a mom who's 86, she still works in her green houses, she's still very active, and I'm right behind her, so I have to make sure that things are in place to protect all of us when it gets to that time. I have the opportunity to do that. I'm going to stay as long as I'm physically and mentally able to do it.

#### What is one piece of advice you would give to law enforcement officers on the topic of dealing with the elderly?

They need to be conscious of the signs and symptoms. Every time they are at a run for any kind of complaint, they have the opportunity to intercede or recognize that somebody there is a victim.

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Nikki Henderson has spent the majority of her career fighting against elder abuse. She served as sergeant over the first Crimes Against Seniors Unit created in 2000 at the Jefferson County Police Department.

PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

## Mickey Rooney's Story

Mickey Rooney, who began as a child star and acted in more than 200 movies gave an emotional testimony before a senate panel on elder abuse in March 2011. Rooney, 90, charged two of his step-children with taking his money, denying him his medication and withholding food. Rooney said his step-children had bullied and threatened him, making him "effectively a prisoner in his home." To view part of his testimony before the senate panel, scan this QR code with your smart phone or go to [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST\\_7kf7UCqw&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST_7kf7UCqw&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

